

**News Release**

**For immediate release**

**24th May 2016**

**First Gosport Peninsula Charity Pursuit a great success!**

The inaugural Gosport Peninsula Charity Pursuit was officially started off Gilkicker Point in the eastern Solent on Saturday 21st May. All 20 yachts with all 96 crew onboard crossed the finish line after the fun chase around the solent.

The event, modelled on the Eddystone Charity Pursuit in Plymouth, is mainly about fundraising for good causes rather than winning the trophy, The Gosport Challenge Cup, from the town hall's silverware cabinet.  However, there was no shortage of friendly banter during the skippers briefing at Hardy's at Haslar and on the water.  The weather conditions were just right to allow the 24 mile course, sailing around the Nab Tower and back to Gilkicker via Browndown. The Pursuit is organised by Gosport Marine Scene CIC as part of the Gosport Marine Festival events series.

As the start gun sounded Neil Chapman of Boatshed.com, the official  Sponsor said “it’s fantastic to see so many smiling faces on the water as the yachts crossed the start line. A wonderful event to raise thousands for local charities and get Gosport out on the water together”

Following the on the water action, a Prize Giving and BBQ were hosted at Hornet Sailing Club. A packed venue of 220 revellers were entertained by The Big Noise Samba Band, Stokes Bay Strummers, and the humorous Master of Ceremonies and Pursuit Director Peter Newell.  Peter, retired Race Director of the Tall Ships Race and his team of volunteers professionally, and without succumbing to bribery, announced the winners of the various prize categories.  Which included: Overall Pursuit Winner sponsored by You Boat, with the Gosport Challenge Cup presented by Deputy Mayor Linda Batty to Skipper Geoff Goodwin of 'Wizard'; Best Dressed Yacht sponsored by Boatshed.com; Oldest Crew sponsored by Trafalgar Property Services; Youngest Crew sponsored by ASTO and Highest Fundraiser sponsored by The Fighting Cocks Pub.

A last minute addition to the prizes was added - Best Banter was presented by Skipper Chris Hirst from the Little Brig Sailing Trust, whose tall ship TS Bob Allen acted as the outer marker and best placed to hear the brilliant 'chat' from the competitors.  Final results can be found at www.gosportmarinescene.com

Around £5000 of fundraising for 13 charities has been confirmed to date, with 8 yachts still confirming their final total.  Local charities benefiting include: Gosport Sea Cadet Unit, GAFIRS, Rona Sailing Project, Portsmouth Sail Training Trust, Royal Artillery Charitable Fund, Street Pastors, The Vernon Mine Warfare and Diving Monument, as well as several national charities.

Local business The Fighting Cocks, and Gosport based charter company Team Sailing partnered to invite the Gosport Marine Futures crew to participate in the event. Gosport Marine Futures is a sail training bursary for ten Gosport 14-17 year olds, to inspire the next generation of sportsmen and leisure marine employees. At the end of the pursuit 15 year old Sophie Smith announced "I'm going to train to be a training skipper so I can give others the experience I have just had.  I've found my place and direction in life"

Tony Lidgate, Skipper of Free Spirit and winner of Best Dressed Yacht commented on the event picture gallery "While the photos are awesome, there wouldn't have been anything to photograph were it not for stupendous organisation by Peter Newell and his team. My congrats and thanks to them all." Photos of the day are available from www.tombarnettphotography.co.uk all proceeds going to the Gosport Marine Futures sail training bursary and Gosport Marine Festival 2017.

Due to the success of the event Gosport Marine Scene have announced the date of the 2017 pursuit as Saturday 10 June.  Entry forms will be available on www.gosportmarinescene.com shortly.

**/ENDS**

**Notes for Editors**

About Gosport Marine Scene and Gosport:

Organiser of Gosport's: Marine Business Network, Gosport Marine Festival June 2015, Talent & Career Programme

Gosport Peninsula is a centre of excellence in ocean racing, sail training, marine tourism and trade.

Gosport is the home of: Alex Thomson Racing & Hugo Boss, Clipper Round the World Race, Global Ocean Race, Sail Training International, ASTO, Ocean Youth Trust South, Lee-on-Solent RYA Onboard, Toe in the Water . . . just for starters